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# THE MODEL CHRISTIAN WORKER

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THE

# MODEL CHRISTIAN WORKER,

# JOHN POTTER.

BY THE
REV. WM. P. BREED, D.D.,
AUTHOR OF "FEEDING ON CHRIST," ETC.

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OF the great divine-human model of character and life it was said, "He went about doing good." He went about—not in quest of wealth, for the earth is his, and the fullness thereof; not to secure the objects of worldly ambition, for when the people began to shout their huzzas and say, "Go to, let us make him king," he withdrew and hid himself from them;—he went about to work the weal of the poor and needy, the weary and heavy-laden.

He "went about;" he did not stay at home and expend his energies in sighing over the infinite needs of men. Sympathy is a virtue. The prompt, warm response of one heart to the strokes that have fallen on others is the prerogative of the truly great and good. It argues largeness and diffusiveness of nature. But sympathy which does not embody itself in action is a force that

moves nothing, a hand that grasps nothing, a pair of feet resting on a pillow. Sympathy that stays at home in one street in behalf of starvation in another street does nothing to arrest the progress of the starvation or to mitigate a single pang. But the sympathy of Jesus was an impelling force that bore him about doing good. His knowledge of the needs of men was a stimulus, not a paralysis. He knew more than any one else of the herculean work that behooved to be done. He knew that there were whole acres, square miles, kingdoms, continents of misery to be mitigated, of depravities to be counteracted, of errors to be uprooted, and he knew that every single act of Christian charity was fraught with the fruitage of God for needy man. So "he went about doing good."

Prayer is a power. On the lips of an Elijah it locked up the heavens and threw away the key. And, again, it unlocked the brazen gates of the sky, and let down on the perished earth the life-giving treasures of the rain. What could it not have done on the lip of Jesus of Nazareth? But he did not shut himself up to prayer; "he went about doing good."

And will any one say, hint or think that we do anything unseemly or unbecoming when we write these words as an inscription over the photograph of a plain, humble wayfarer along the highways of time—one who knew little of gilded halls

of wealth, of sumptuous fare, of attire of crimson and purple and fine twined linen—little of the achievements of science and the loftier walks of education and culture? Will the Son of God resent it as an injury if we take these words which the Holy Spirit applied to him and apply them to a plain ploughman in his field? Is not every believer alive with the life that is in Christ Jesus? May not every believer say, and say truly, "Christ liveth in me"? Why, then, should not this life in the believer issue in acts harmonious with those of the Source of the life? We know of no other text that so accurately tells the life-tale of the man of whom we write as this: "He went about doing good." In the year 1820, when he was seventeen years old, he went up, in Bunyan's phrase, to the man at the door with the inkhorn before him and said, "Set down my name," and then went in and took his seat at his first communion-table. In the year 1878 the angels came and bore his spirit up to Abraham's bosom; and during that long period of fifty-eight years the sound of his footfall was heard almost as incessantly as the click of the pendulum as he went about doing good. For twenty-five years he acted as colporteur or agent of the American Tract Society, and for eight years he served as city missionary in the employ of the West Spruce Street Church of Philadelphia, carrying also a commission as colporteur from the Presbyterian Board

of Publication. His service as colporteur and city missionary consisted in going from house to house exhorting, comforting, relieving in multitudes of cases the physical wants of the poor, giving a tract or a volume or a copy of the word of God, kneeling in the family and praying with and for them, and entreating the unconverted to be reconciled to God. Was not this literally to go about doing good?

JOHN POTTER was born in the year 1803 in Allegheny county, twelve miles south of Pittsburg, Pennsylvania; his father, also John Potter, was descended from a Huguenot ancestry driven from France after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. His mother, Jane Campbell Potter, was of Scotch parentage, of the clan now represented by the duke of Argyle. There mingled in his blood, therefore, combined memories of those grand old Presbyterians who under Coligny fought the battle with the Catherines de Medicis and the horrid Guises in France, and of those who, with the Knoxes and the Melvilles, won the victory over the Mortons and the Marys in rugged, glorious old Scotland. He was therefore in blood and bones, as well as in creed, character and spirit, a thoroughgoing Presbyterian.

It was in the year 1792 that his parents left the north of Ireland, crossed the Atlantic, plunged into the wilds of Pennsylvania, and at length pitched their tent on the spot where the subject of this memoir was born. Here they lived and here

they died,—the mother at the age of eighty-four, and the father at the age of eighty-eight.

The father was a man of God, and his clear recognition of the presence and providence of God, and his habit of seeking divine guidance in all the every-day duties of life, made such an impression on the mind and heart of his son as to reproduce themselves in all their fullness in his long and active life. His mother was a woman of more than ordinary intellectual and spiritual endowments, and of true fidelity as a Christian parent. She was in the habit of conversing with her children on the subject of personal religion. Thus from his earliest years John Potter breathed the atmosphere of godliness. While yet quite a child he was in the habit of taking his wants to God in prayer. Being sent of an errand, and fearing he might meet a deranged man of the neighborhood on his way, he kneeled beneath a tree to ask the divine protection. Very early in his life the Spirit of God began to move upon his heart and to fill his mind with thoughts of sacred things.

One day his uncle, Philip Potter, visited them, bringing with him a volume which had accompanied him across the ocean. It was Doddridge's *Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul.* This volume he left at Mrs. Potter's, and John one evening, when he was about seventeen years of age, went to the bookshelves to find something to read. His eye was caught by the title of this book,

and he was soon deep in its perusal. As he read the Spirit of God touched his heart, and ere long that heart was surging under the power of the thoughts that palpitate beneath the words on those mighty pages as the Sea of Galilee surges under the winds of God. And now he felt the necessity to pray. But there was no place in that humble home where he might be all alone with his soul and his God. It was winter, the snow covered the landscape. But he left the house and withdrew to the orchard, and there on the ground, beneath an apple tree, he kneeled and poured out his soul in supplication for pardon and acceptance with God. How vividly we can picture to ourselves that scene —the ground white with snow, the frozen branches of the leafless trees crackling in the wind, the moonbeams struggling through the clouds and mingling with the sighing of the wind and the crackling of the branches, the cries of that boy to Heaven for the priceless gift, salvation! In the daytime he would go to the barn, climb the ladder, and there in one corner kneel upon the hay and repeat his wrestlings with God in prayer. At times he would lie prostrate on his face and bewail his sin and guilt in the eye of an all-holy God.

Now, however trivial in the eyes of self-complacent, secular pride may be the spectacle of a youth of seventeen bowed in the hayloft, or on his knees in the snow under the trees in the orchard with the night winds whistling around him, or

prostrate on his face, wrestling in a great agony with a sense of sin and guilt, for a sense of pardon and reconciliation with God, in the eye of the angels and of sound reason not the spectacle of Columbus wrestling with the problem of a new world beyond the sea, of Sir Isaac Newton grappling with the great principle of gravitation, of Leverrier groping in the great cloud of mathematical calculations after that elusive planet, is so fraught with true moral grandeur.

All this while he kept the knowledge of this conflict to himself. To his father, whose heart the tidings would have filled with solemn pleasure, to his mother, whose eyes would have run down with tears of joy at the discovery, he said not a word. His course in this respect was that of millions of others. What is the secret of this mystery? Why is it that especially members of the same family, who converse with untrammelled freedom upon any other interests that concern them, are tongue-tied on the subject of their own personal religious experience? Even the Christian members of the household, who can with all readiness exhort sinners in the outside world to be reconciled to God, often find it next to impossible to say a word to brother, sister, wife or husband. It is related of even the eloquent Chalmers that on a certain occasion, when a minister peculiarly gifted in addressing children was spending a day at his house, he said to his guest, "Now, my good brother, I will leave

you in the parlor to speak to my child about her soul, and I will go to my room and pray for you and her; for I find it almost impossible to say a word to her directly on the subject." And how hard it is, too, for a child to go to a Christian parent and say, "Father, mother, I am a lost sinner; please pray with me that I may be saved"! And in that counting-house the clerk will almost as soon bite off his tongue as he will say to a fellow-clerk, "I am in distress for my soul." That young woman in the seminary whose mind knows no rest because of conviction for sin—conviction that has seized upon her in answer to an absent, perchance to a now sainted, mother's prayers—hides her solemn secret in her heart, and often grieves away the striving Spirit of God. Pride is often the cause of this sinful reticence; guilty shame, fear of attracting attention, remark, ridicule, often lies at the root of this unwise and sinful reluctance. At such are aimed by the Holy Spirit the words that played so solemn a part in the spiritual life of young Potter: "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed when he shall come in his own glory and in his Father's, and the holy angels."

One of the wisest, one of the safest things a soul under conviction of sin, can do is to go to some trusted friend or relative and tell the story of his convictions and beg an interest in his prayers.

As the writer was preaching one evening he was interrupted in his discourse by the almost passionate weeping of four boys in the congregation before him. After service he took them to his study, talked and prayed with them, and then charged them, "Go home and tell your parents just how you feel, and ask them to pray for you." They did so. All four became members of the church. One of them became a foreign missionary, another a pastor over a church where for very many years he has labored with large success.

Why young Potter did not open his mind to his godly parents we do not know. He did, however, make an effort to speak with his pastor, who, unhappily, was not easily accessible, and who was little accustomed to hold conversation with his people on the subject of personal religion. One Sabbath evening, after sermon, John took pains to throw himself in the way of his pastor in the hope that the latter would say a word to him which might open the way to an unburdening of his soul to his spiritual shepherd. He watched for an opportunity, and when his pastor was alone he rode up to him. The latter turned his head, and seeing the boy made some remark which had such an effect on the modest youth that he immediately dropped to the rear and gave up the attempt at an interview. Among the gifts and graces that we

pastors ought to cultivate is that of easy approachability by the young and modest and shrinking in our congregations. To whom ought the lambs to run—especially in the momentous hours when the Spirit of God is striving with them, and while they are in danger of grieving him away for ever—if not to their shepherd? No shepherd has the right to wear the lion's mane of unapproachable dignity and frighten the lambs away. Who believes that the babes of old shrank back and cried when Jesus took them in his arms? Who can imagine that those little ones did not put their arms about his neck as knowing instinctively that he was their best friend? If any young pastor reads these lines, let him make a vow that whatever else he does he will make himself so accessible to the young of his flock that they will come to him with their spiritual wants and troubles as a child goes to its parents.

But, happily for many a soul and for many a family and many a church, our young friend, though he sought not the spiritual counsel of his parents and failed to secure that of his pastor, did not give up the search for eternal life. His convictions were too deep, the truths of God's word were too vivid in his apprehension, and his sense of danger was too keen, to allow of this. Months, however, rolled away, during which he experienced a never-yielding distress of mind over his condition as one unpardoned and unsaved. Yet

without all doubt whatever of discomfort was involved in this experience—and, indeed, whatever sin may have been mixed with this want of faith in the Saviour—still this depth and pungency of conviction wrought in him an especial qualification for the work that awaited him in dealing for so many years with so many hundreds of sinners under conviction of sin. At last, however, Mercy came to his relief. As he was one day following the plough through the field, turning up the mellow soil to receive the seed for the future crop, a light above that of the sun that lay upon the landscape fell upon his soul and gave the peace that passeth understanding. For a while he mounted up on wings as eagles. His mouth was filled with laughter and his tongue with singing; his root was spread out by the waters, and the dew lay all night upon his branch; his glory was fresh in him, and his bow was renewed in his hand. But ere long the wings of his joyous flight were clipped by a fresh experience of the sinfulness of his heart. His light was obscured by clouds of doubt; he was harassed with fears lest his peace had been a delusion, and instead of flying he found it hard to run and not be weary—yea, even to walk and not to faint—nay, even to stand in the evil day.

Communion-day came, and the going forward of others to the table of the Lord made appeals to his conscience hard to resist; but be-

tween him and the Palace Beautiful fear like a lion stood and shook its mane and glared upon him —fear that in sitting down at that table he should eat and drink unworthily and bring evil upon his soul. Communion-day, therefore, found him again among the spectators—not a careless rejecter of, or rebel against, the Saviour's dying command, but a sad and misled spectator of the solemn scene. How many are like him in all our congregations! The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come;" the blessed Saviour says, "Come;" every spiritual interest of the soul cries, "Come;" and yet for months and years they hesitate and deprive themselves of the food that Jesus offers them. The reasons why many stay from the table of the Lord are very different from those which influenced young Potter. Some are absent from that table because they do not believe that this service is necessary to salvation, forgetting that a positive command of the Saviour is not to be set aside by any reasonings of ours. Others say that there are people out of the Church as good as many who are in it. This no doubt is true, for there are some in the Church who at the judgment-day will find themselves at the left hand of God. Others, again, shrink from the discharge of this duty, lest they find themselves unable to keep the vows which such an approach involves. The writer, when a young man, pondering this duty, went to his pastor, the Rev. John M. Krebs, D. D., and said

to him, "I would like to be a member of the Church, but I fear that I should soon break my vows and bring condemnation on myself." The reply came in the form of the question: "Has not the Saviour promised to give strength to those who go forward in duty trusting in him?" "Yes." "Well, then, suppose you put him to his word." That reply settled the question. Some say, "I am not worthy," but who ever was worthy? In Christ, however, we are infinitely worthy, and from one cause or another there is reason to believe that at all times there is a very large number of true, humble Christians standing in the outer courts of the temple looking wistfully in, but as yet not daring to enter and sit down at the table of the Lord. That which kept our young friend away so long was a profound sense of sin and a doubt whether or not his sins were forgiven.

Ever and anon through all this time the word would come ringing in his ear, "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels," quickening his convictions and distressing his heart. In this style of experience something like a year passed away. Again the communion season approached. A meeting of the session was announced. Once more the question was to be answered one way or the other:

"Wilt thou now after so long a time do this in remembrance of me?" This question he answered by presenting himself to the session and asking admission to the table of the Lord. This threw the responsibility of his presence at the table of the Lord, or of his absence from it, upon the office-bearers of the church. This course was wise, and many in similar frame of mind would do well to follow this example, for often there is a feeble faith, and a trembling hope which is yet so mixed with doubts and fears that the subject of them is in a large degree disqualified from judging what course is most in accordance with the dictates of wisdom and duty, while pastor and elders, with their riper Christian experience and long and large acquaintance with spiritual moods, are well fitted to decide whether or not the applicant is prepared for enrollment among the public professors of the faith of Christ.

One of the members of the session was so struck with the replies of the applicant that he repeated many of them in the hearing of his young son, the result of which was so deep an impression on the mind of the listener as, with other things, to lead him also to the Saviour; that son became the late Rev. A. Williams, D. D., pastor of the church at Leetsdale, Pennsylvania. Thus do the sparks from the anvil of God kindle the fires of salvation in the prairies of time.

With characteristic decision he went from the communion-table where the public pledge had been

recorded, and in the closet, having copied from Doddridge's *Rise and Progress* a form of personal dedication, on his knees he set his name to the bond dedicating himself, body, soul and spirit, to God for evermore.

The honesty of this dedication was soon to be tested. A boy ten years old living in the family of a notoriously ungodly man was taken sick with a form of illness that threatened soon to bear its victim to the grave. The condition of that boy, sick and dying in such a family with no one to minister to his spiritual wants, necessarily awakened widespread interest. The sister of the boy sought in all directions through the neighborhood for help in this time of trouble, but for a long time her quest was in vain. One and another refused to venture into the house of the son of Belial. At length the sister came to Mrs. Potter and told her sad story. Mrs. Potter sent into the harvest-field at once for her son. On his arrival she told him the story of the dying boy, and then she said, "Now, Johnny, you must go and talk and pray with him." But his young spirit shrank, as many an older one might shrink, not only from venturing into the house of a man whose harsh, ungodly spirit was likely to break forth in insult and abuse, and possible expulsion from the doors, but more than all from the solemn responsibility of taking in hand the direction of an immortal soul just ready to spread its wings for the flight to the

eternal world. For a while it seemed to him that the task was one that he could not assume, but his mother would take no denial. She felt that if this boy, whose case had been brought, in the providence of God, to her door, should die without Christian counsel and prayer, his blood might lie upon her and hers. She therefore insisted: "Johnny, you must go; you can tell him how you found the Saviour." And while he yet hesitated the Spirit of God in execution of his office, whereby he brings to remembrance the words of Jesus, startled him by whispering in his ear, "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and my words," etc. etc. He yielded, and at once with a trembling heart set out upon his solemn errand. As he passed through the woods he sought a convenient place, and, kneeling beneath a tree, poured out a fervent petition to God to prepare the way before him and to gird him for the work. To his great relief, on his arrival he learned that the wicked man was at work in the field. Finding the boy very sick, he told him briefly and simply the old, old story, and then kneeling down prayed for him, and came away. The ice was now broken. Again and again he visited that boy, and at length the light began to dawn upon that hitherto benighted mind. Heart failed and flesh fast failed, but God became the strength of the dying boy's heart and his portion for ever. The lone boy walked through the valley of the shadow of death, fearing no evil, for the Lord was with him; his rod

and his staff they comforted him. So early did God set the seal of success upon the labors of this young Christian worker.

Events seemed to show that he had indulged unnecessary fear of the wicked householder, for in about a twelvemonth after the death of the stranger boy in his home God came and took a child from his family circle, and when the question arose about some one to conduct the funeral service, the man would allow no one to be sent for but the youthful Potter. So often is the lion before which we tremble chained in harmlessness! A striking illustration of this came to the knowledge of the writer years ago. Those who knew the Hon. Theodore Frelinghuysen well remember that for simple, humble piety he was a portion of the salt of the earth. As a practitioner at the Newark (New Jersey) bar he laid upon himself the duty to speak personally on the subject of religion to every other member not known to be a professor of the faith of Christ. A distinguished member of the bar at that time was the Hon. Samuel L. Southard. Between these two eminent men the closest intimacy existed; and, strange to say, the very intimacies of friendship, which would seem specially to facilitate Christian advances and religious conversation, often lift themselves into arduous barriers to such advances. And it happened in this case, as in so many others, that the duty of personal appeal to his friend with reference to the necessity of repentance and faith

was postponed again and again, until at last Mr. Frelinghuysen said to himself, "This duty must be discharged." Accordingly, he set out from his home for the home of his friend on the momentous errand, and the nearer he approached the goal the more formidable the lion in the way seemed to be. At last, with a trembling hand, he rang the bell, and was of course most cordially welcomed. As soon as he might he introduced his errand, the great theme, and what was his surprise to find Mr. Southard listening to him not only with polite, but with interested and thankful, attention! The lion was no lion, but a gentle lamb.

Not long after the death of the neighbor's child another communion season came, and during the various exercises by which the celebration of this solemn sacrament was accompanied and followed in those days three or four theological students came to spend a few days within the bounds of the congregation. Taking advantage of their presence, the Rev. Dr. Ralston appointed a young men's prayer-meeting, to be conducted by them; and coming to John Potter he told him of the meeting and said to him, "Now I want you to attend the meeting, and to be ready, if called on, to lead in prayer." Having as yet never led in prayer in a public meeting, he shrank with unaffected humility from the proposed service, and begged to be excused. But again the old warning came: "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me," etc. etc., and the

call of duty found him in his place. He had put his hand to the plough, and he dared not look back. Those who can recall the emotions with which they struggled through with the first prayer they were called to offer in the prayer-meeting can imagine the fluttering of heart and stammering of tongue with which he executed this solemn duty.

When he was about twenty years of age he met the Rev. Mr. Hoge of Washington, Pennsylvania. Mr. Hoge was deeply impressed with the spirit of the young man, and some time after sent him an invitation to visit him, saying that he had a proposition to make to him. He accepted the invitation and the proposition was one that for a time caused him no little perplexity of mind. It was no other than an offer to assist him in obtaining an education for the gospel ministry. This was not a proposition to be disposed of one way or the other without serious consideration. He pondered it honestly and long. He took it repeatedly to God in prayer. His purpose was in this as in every other proceeding of his life to do what should seem to him to be the will of God. His health at the time was not good—he was troubled with an ailment which a sedentary life would almost surely increase; his means were limited: these with other considerations led him at last to decide that the Master had not called him to the sacred office. But even after his decision had been honestly made according to the light bestowed upon him, the suggestion that

his decision might have been made on insufficient grounds would come across his mind with disturbing force and awaken fear that he had set his will against the will of God. He vowed, however, that if God ever gave him a son, that son should be devoted to this blessed work; and when his first-born was given him he remembered his vow and kept it. That son has now been preaching the gospel for twenty-three years; and not only that son, but three other sons besides, one of whom, John W., is now with his father and mother at the right hand of God in heaven. Of the other sons, John H. is preaching the gospel at Winterset, Iowa; Gilbert M. at Sharpsburg, Pennsylvania; and Henry N. at Darlington, Pennsylvania.

When he was twenty-two years of age notice was given in the church that on a day specified an election for ruling elders would be held. When the day arrived the people were informed that the right of suffrage in that church vested in the heads of families, and that all others would withdraw. Mr. Potter of course withdrew with the rest, and sat under the shade of a tree during the progress of election, and on their return and the names of the elders elect were announced, what was his amazement and disquietude to hear his own name as one of them! To his apprehension the responsibilities of this sacred office were for others than such as he. After the audience was dismissed he went up to his pastor and

said, "Doctor, surely you do not expect me to accept the office of ruling elder in the church?"

"Young man," answered Dr. Ralston, "take care what you do. In the providence of God you have been chosen to this office. You had better be careful how you venture to refuse the call."

He went home under a deep sense of the grave responsibility involved in either the acceptance or refusal of the office. According to his invariable custom, he spread the matter in prayer before his God, and then anxiously awaited the result. He dared not formally decline, and yet he devoutly hoped that when the day of ordination came objection would be made by members of the congregation on the ground, if on no other, that he was far too young to be admitted to the eldership. Indeed, it occasioned no little comment in the community that such a mere youth should have been chosen for such an office, for in those times it was rare to find a young man even at the communion-table. Yet the comment was rather that of commendation of the good sense of the electors in preferring fitness to mere years than of disparagement of either them or the object of their choice. When the day of ordination arrived he was at his post, listening anxiously in the hope that when the usual question was put, "Do you, the members of this church, acknowledge and receive this brother as a ruling elder? and do you promise to yield him all that honor, encour-

agement and obedience in the Lord to which his office, according to the word of God and the constitution of this church, entitle him ?" there might be such dissent as would release him from the heavy responsibility which in his view attached to the office. But the people were too well acquainted with the richness of his qualification for the office, and too glad to accept the treasure the Lord had sent them, to do otherwise than assent most heartily to the question. Seeing at last that there was no escape, he submitted with solemn reluctance to what now seemed to him to be the will of God.

On the first day of January, 1828, Mr. Potter was married to Miss Eliza Hair, daughter of James Hair, Esq., of Monongahela City, elder of the Presbyterian church of that place. She had been instructed from her youth in the doctrines of the gospel. At the age of sixteen she had made a profession of religion, a step to which she often referred with grateful delight. From this time to the hour of her death, March 17, 1869, she was in every sense a helpmeet of this model Christian worker. She delighted in the Sabbath-school; her class was always full; many of her scholars are now active laborers in the vineyard of Christ. She was remarkably hospitable; her house was well called "the ministers' hotel." She was always ready to do an act of kindness. She made no show of her generosity, yet hers was one

of the warmest hearts that ever beat in human bosom. Her religion was one of the quiet kind; "The Lord knows, and that is enough," was often her answer. She was one of the staunchest Presbyterians, perfectly devoted to the cause of Christ, and a great lover of the prayer-meeting as well as of family and secret prayer. She helped to sustain a female prayer-meeting, maintained family worship in the absence of her husband, and her children yet feel the impress of her private prayer when she took some of them with her or they drew near and listened to her pleadings with her God. Most closely did she watch the habits of her children, and with tears entreat them to give their hearts to the Saviour. These appeals could not but be felt. She was quick in detecting character. Two of her brothers are in the ministry—Rev. Samuel Hair of Chicago and Rev. G. M. Hair of Baltimore. Death, as he drew near, had no terrors for her. She loved to talk of her Saviour. She was fond of music. "Nearer, my God, to Thee," and "My Soul, come, Meditate the Day," etc., were favorite hymns which she often asked to have sung after she could no longer sing. Her departure can scarcely be called death. She had slept sweetly for five or six hours, and was still sleeping so till she ceased to breathe.

Shortly after Mr. Potter's marriage a Sabbath-school was opened in connection with the church at Mingo, and placed under the charge of ruling

elders Mr. Benjamin Williams—fondly called Uncle Benjamin—and Mr. Potter. In this school Mr. Potter taught a class of young ladies, two of whom ere long, as they acknowledged, through his fidelity as their teacher, became professed followers of Christ and devoted in their Christian life.

With Mr. Potter, Sabbath-school teaching was anything but an easy formality. Whoever can go before a Sabbath-school class with no equipment for the hour but a general and too often very meagre knowledge of the great Book, he could not. He dared not, by treating the young immortals in his class with such crude provision, take away all stimulus to prompt, punctual attendance, and thus keep them in a frame of mind which made it as easy for them to stay at home or loiter on the way as to be present in the class and always on the lookout for a pretext upon which to absent themselves altogether. Fully and solemnly aware of the interests that might be involved in a single hour before his class, he was in the habit of diligent, even laborious, preparation for his work. He secured commentaries and a Bible dictionary, and with these and his Bible he would be seen, during the spare moments in the intervals of his daily toil, searching for the truth as for hid treasure. He did this not as a piece of drudgery, but as a luxury, for he knew that in preparing spiritual food for his class he was feeding his own soul. And while

engaged in work he and his brother were in the habit of talking over the lesson of the coming Sabbath.

Nor was this his only means of preparation. God in his providence laid another duty upon him which was of great service in fitting him not only for labor in his Sabbath-school class, but for the grand work he was to accomplish in his future and more public life. His mother became disabled by sickness from going to the house of God on the Sabbath day, and she was in the habit of saying to her son on his return from church, "Now, Johnny, tell me all about the sermon you heard to day." To be ready for this he had to become a very attentive listener while the preacher delivered his message; and as his pastor, Dr. Ralston, was an excellent sermonizer and a fine theologian, this practice of listening and reporting the discourses became to him a most valuable mental discipline and means of instruction; and so it will be with all careful listeners to well-prepared sermons. If the minister be a man of education, and of diligence in the preparation of his sermons, there is no one, however gifted, no one, however learned, who by careful listening will not grow in intellect as well as in moral excellence. Our ordinary pulpit service consists of a series of carefully-prepared lectures on themes of infinite magnitude and of infinite importance. In these discourses there is a constant presentation of such

ideas as these: God—infinite, eternal and unchangeable in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth; eternity—shoreless, bottomless, measureless; Christ—bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, yet very God of very God; his life; his death, bearing our sin in his own body on the tree; man—God's image, mortal, immortal; sin—the leprosy that has gone into the world's very bones; everlasting punishment; life eternal. Now to grapple with and be led to measure and ponder themes like these Sabbath after Sabbath, year after year, will work both a moral and intellectual training in any man—a training that will tell heavily and happily on the mental and moral powers of any man; and it was by these means that Mr. Potter prepared himself to meet his class of immortal souls on the Sabbath day. Would that the good Lord would send us a new and large supply of such Sabbath-school teachers. And let every Sabbath-school teacher bear it in mind that this constant study and preparation to meet a Sabbath-school class is just the training needed to make one useful in the Church and among friends, acquaintance and men everywhere. Unconsciously, Mr. Potter was now preparing himself for that career of usefulness which will keep his name in remembrance among God's children when millions who were on the stage of life with him, and who filled a much larger space in the world's eye, will be forgotten for ever.

Mr. Potter lived five miles from church, and in the afternoon after church and Sabbath-school were over, he and his brother were wont to set out for another place some distance away where the people were destitute of the means of grace, and there they established and conducted a mission-school. At this place the seed was sown that added new sheaves to the granary of Heaven. The fondness of the money-getter for money, and of the pleasure-seeker for gratification, and of the scholar for knowledge, are insatiable; no less insatiable was the fondness of Mr. Potter for labor in his Master's cause.

At length the time arrived for his entrance upon a new and wider field of life and labor. His elder brother had expressed a strong desire for a farm-home on the bank of a river. To gratify this desire search had been made, and an eligible property secured thirty-five miles below Pittsburg, on the bank of the Ohio River. The site was one of rich and even romantic beauty—an undulating landscape diversified with towering bluffs, all overspread with virgin forest of various woods, interspersed with evergreens, ignorant as yet of the axe of civilization, and frequented by troops of untamed deer, and in the autumn, when "the year puts on its visionary tints and falling leaves falter through motionless air," looking as if a thousand rainbows had become inextricably entangled among the branches of the trees, and withal, through

spring and fall, summer and winter, the old river rolling solemnly by like the stream of time sweeping onward to eternity.

But while man proposes God disposes. Hardly had that older brother laid low a few of the old forest trees and let in the unhindered sunlight upon the long-shadowed soil, when death came and laid his body low in the ground, and sent his spirit away to enjoy landscapes grander and more beautiful than earth has ever known since sin spoiled the original Paradise. Attempts to sell the farm having failed, it was given to John, and greatly against his inclination he set out with his wife and one child, eighteen months old, for his new home. He arrived April 7, 1830. If he had been reluctant to remove to this new abode, he soon became still more reluctant to remain there. Of what avail to a godly spirit all the beauties of Nature, brightness of skies and full-hearted generosity of soil, if all is defiled by the leprous depravities of man? Not only was the farm seven miles from the nearest church, not only was the region around one of uncultivated spiritual destitution, but the whole neighborhood was rife with wickedness in its most daring forms. A flourishing distillery—and accordingly drunkenness and all the brood of vices of which it is the prolific parent—profanity, Sabbath-breaking, gambling, and all the rest of the hideous rabble of vices, gave the whole region a sort of Sodomitic character. No wonder, there-

fore, if the heart of the young elder sank within him at the thought of living and bringing up his children amid surroundings such as these. His righteous soul was vexed every day with the filthy conversation of the wicked. For four months he and his young wife rode on horseback seven miles each Sabbath to worship with the people of God. At length the load on his mind and heart became too heavy to be longer borne, and mounting his horse he rode away across the country to consult with "Uncle Benjamin," the venerable ruling elder of the church at Mingo. When he had told the story of his disgust and discouragement the old man asked,

"Why did you buy a farm in such a neighborhood?"

"I did not buy it; father gave it to me."

"Then you had nothing whatever to do with locating yourself there?"

"Nothing whatever."

"Consider, then, what may be the providential meaning of this. If *you* had nothing to do with this arrangement yourself, you may rest assured the *Lord* had; and now the proper question for you is, 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?'"

"What do you think I ought to do?"

"As you return, stop in Pittsburg and get a volume of good sermons; get also some books and tracts; start a Sabbath-school; hold a meeting on the Sabbath; read the Bible to the people; read

a sermon also, and talk or pray with them; go to every house in the neighborhood; invite the people to your meeting and Sabbath-school; talk with them, pray with them, give each of them a tract, and see that every family has a Bible."

"You would not have me stay away from church, would you?"

"Certainly I would. Have a church and Sabbath-school of your own. Get Presbytery to send you a preacher occasionally, and try and do the people good. The Lord has sent you into that neighborhood for a purpose; see that you do the work that he has laid to your hand."

Such reasoning he was not prepared to resist. He returned to his new home and to the work to which he now felt that God had called him.

At length, after no little consultation and prayer, and amid the sneers and jeers of the sons of Belial by whom he was surrounded, and the emphatically expressed misgivings of his friends, who confidently predicted failure, assuring him that the people were too wicked for such an enterprise to prosper, he opened a Sabbath-school. A room in a private house was offered, and on the first day eleven pupils entered the school. Opposition soon gave way, as it always will to honest Christian energy and perseverance. Impressed with the resolute spirit of the young elder, the neighbors began ere long to lend a helping hand. The truth is, that the spirit of Christian consecration invests

one with a solemn authority before which unbelief stands abashed, and even reluctant children of God are awed into acquiescence if not into active co-operation.

The writer knew a young man—who had been a leader in the ranks of evil in his native village—after his conversion to yield to the conviction that he ought to go into every house in that town and pray with every household. Nor was he disobedient to the heavenly suggestion. He went, and every door was opened before him as before a prophet of God, for he was indeed a prophet. Would God all the Lord's people were such prophets!

It was not long before the house where the Sabbath-school met was found too small to contain the numbers who sought admission. Another room was offered, the largest in the neighborhood. For a long time Mr. Potter was the only teacher. No other person competent to engage in this work resided in the neighborhood excepting Mrs. Potter, whose duties as a mother forbade her rendering the assistance which otherwise she would gladly have offered. But Mr. Potter's heart was too warmly engaged in the work to allow room for discouragement. He offered prayer; he led the singing; he read and expounded the word of God. Nor did his prayerful zeal go long unrewarded. Not many Sabbaths went by before the fixed gaze and the tear in the eye of one pupil and another certified

him that if he was the only human teacher in that school, there was a divine Teacher worth ten thousand men and women, however wise they might be, even the Spirit of God.

And now not only the children came, but their parents began to attend, and their interest was awakened. A small but carefully-selected Sabbath-school library was obtained, and the truth carried home on the printed page reinforced the utterances of the living voice, and greatly enlarged the influence of the Sabbath-school.

But even yet the head and heart of the young elder were unsatisfied. He must add preaching to the work of teaching. Accordingly, he purchased a volume of Burder's *Village Sermons*, and gave notice that each Sabbath, after the Sabbath-school exercises were closed, he would conduct public worship. The people came in large numbers. The house was thronged with an eager, hungry audience. After a little season of singing and prayer Mr. Potter read to the people a sermon from the volume, feeling in his soul that God was at work through him in the hearts of the people.

And still he was not satisfied. They must hold a prayer-meeting. Accordingly, a weekly prayer-meeting was established, to be held from house to house as the people desired. Year after year this prayer-meeting was held, not only in winter, but steadily on through the heat and toil of the harvest-season also. Mr. Potter was one who never asked

permission of the thermometer or of the clouds or of the state of the roads to do any work for his Master. Tired as he might be from his toil in following the plough or in wielding the scythe in the harvest-field, he was never too tired to walk two or three miles to attend his prayer-meeting; and to that meeting he went just as promptly through pitch darkness as under the light of the moon or stars—just as resolutely through rain and snow as through balmy breezes of a summer evening.

In the exercises of the meeting there was no one to take part with him. He gave out a hymn and led in the singing; then he offered prayer; then he read the word of God; then another hymn; then an exhortation; then another prayer.

For leading in the service of song he was well qualified by a voice of considerable compass and sweetness. In the church at Mingo he used to sit in the pulpit with the minister, and be ready when the hymn was announced to rise and, as the manner was in those days, "line out" the hymn for the people and lead them in the singing.

After a time his congregation began to attract the attention of the ministers of the remoter vicinity, and now and then one of them would come and spend a Sabbath with Mr. Potter and preach to the people. "Good old Father George Scott," pastor of the Mill Creek church, was one of them.

One day Mr. Potter received a visit from a good,

quiet man, a Mr. Rambo, a Christian man of retiring spirit, who said to him: "Mr. Potter, I have been praying for years that the Lord would send some one into this region to take the lead in the Lord's work, so that I could fall in and help it on; and now I believe he has answered my prayer in sending you."

Mr. Rambo at once entered into the work, and became a staunch helper in cultivating the Lord's vineyard at that place.

The work kept growing on his hands, until it reached such dimensions as to impress Mr. Potter with the conviction that the time had come for the regular organization of a church, that the sacraments might be administered and the work be more firmly grounded.

Accordingly, in 1832 he attended the meeting of the Presbytery of Ohio, and made to it a representation of the condition of things in his vicinity. The presbytery, after listening to the strange story, appointed a committee to proceed to the spot, inquire into the facts of the case, and make report of what they saw and of their judgment of what might be expedient in the premises.

This committee consisted of the Rev. Mr. Allen, the Rev. James D. Ray and Elder Henry Reed. They came, and the ministers preached two sermons in Mr. William Rambo's "horse-mill," that stood on the bank of the Ohio a short distance above "Christler's Landing," now Shippingport. The

committee unanimously reported to presbytery in favor of the organization of a church there. The report was adopted, and the Rev. J. K. Cunningham was appointed to visit the place, preach and organize the church.

Due notice of the action of the presbytery was given to Mr. Potter and the people, and some thirty persons procured their certificates from the neighboring congregations—the word "neighboring" meaning something far different from what is signified by it in a thickly-settled community—and held themselves ready to unite with the new organization.

Mr. Cunningham came, and on Sabbath, June 17, 1832, he preached to the people assembled in a grove on the bank of a stream. On the Monday following the congregation met at the house of Mr. William Conner. Mr. Cunningham preached. The thirty persons were received upon certificate. Mr. Potter was unanimously elected ruling elder in the new organization, and was then installed by Mr. Cunningham. Mr. William Rambo and Mr. Jonathan Cross were then elected additional ruling elders. They were ordained and installed in the September following.

The name given to the church was *Bethlehem*, for they said—and we can easily imagine who said it—"The Lord was born in Bethlehem, and by his grace souls will be born into his kingdom here." And to-day, after forty-six years, the name of that

Bethlehem church stands on the minutes of the General Assembly as under the pastoral charge of the Rev. David L. Dickey, and from that communion-table many hundreds of souls have gone to eat and drink at the marriage-supper of the Lamb. And just across the river from the "Bethlehem" church there stands to-day another church, under the pastoral charge of the Rev. M. A. Parkinson, that church the offspring of the Bethlehem church.

Of the Bethlehem church Mr. Potter was virtually the pastor for a period of thirteen years. He continued to labor in the Sabbath-school through winter and summer, seed-time and harvest. The prayer-meeting was held every week through the whole fifty-two weeks of the year. No weather was too cold or too hot, or too wet or too dry, for his attendance upon his work for Christ in both these fields.

Once a month the presbytery sent supplies for the pulpit. The ministers generally came on Saturday and returned on Monday, unable to tarry for the discharge of any pastoral duty. This was therefore left entirely to Mr. Potter. On the Sabbath he would read one of Burder's village sermons or else some passages from the word of God, upon which he would discourse as the Spirit gave him utterance. During the week he would do a large amount of pastoral visitation. After a hard day's work in the field he would walk miles to visit

the sick and converse and pray with them. Nor did the character or professions or known hostility of the patient to the doctrines and claims of religion ever deter him from attempting his spiritual good. The sick man might have been notorious as an atheist or a blasphemer or a drunkard, yet such was Mr. Potter's knowledge of the power of an awakened conscience, and, above all, such his faith in the power of the Holy Ghost, that persons whom others would have given over as hopeless would be visited and dealt with by Mr. Potter, and sometimes with a success that sent astonishment through the neighborhood. In case of death he was always the one sought for to conduct the funeral services.

Nor did he confine his visits to those who were sick. He visited the families of neglecters of religion, and strove to win them to the house of God on the Sabbath and to the Lord Jesus Christ. When rumors reached him that this or that church-member was going astray, his spirit was stirred within him, and he left no stone unturned in his efforts to bring the wanderer home.

Sometimes persons would move into the neighborhood who sought to poison the minds of the people with erroneous doctrine; and, although far from delighting in controversy, such was his abhorrence and dread of erroneous doctrine that he was ever ready to enter the lists and contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. In

one or two instances he challenged an errorist to public discussion, and so effectually did he plead the cause of truth that his antagonist gave up the contest and left the young elder master of the field.

His familiarity with the doctrines of our Church, and especially with the Bible—appropriate texts ever at his tongue's end—gave him a great advantage over an ordinary opponent. Able as he was in controversy, he, however, came more and more to feel that the best method of meeting error was simply to preach the truth. Nor did the Spirit of God refuse to own his humble labors. At the meetings he was evidently present, applying the truth to the hearts of the hearer. One heart was touched, and another and another. Not unfrequently, as he was at work in the field following the plough or wielding the scythe, he would be interrupted by the visit of some one asking, "What must I do to be saved?"

One and another passed from death unto life. Within four months of the time when the church was organized *thirty-four persons* were admitted to the church on confession of their faith, eighteen of whom were baptized. Among these converts were not only the young, but some whose heads were white with the frosts of time. And not only did the Spirit of God add to the membership of the church, but he also, as the conduct of the converts showed, strengthened them with might by his power in the inner man. They showed by their

deportment that they were rooted and grounded in love. Notwithstanding the miscellaneousness of disposition and character among that frontier people, the utmost peace, harmony and brotherly love characterized the members of the church of Bethlehem.

Among the ministers sent by presbytery to preach at that place was the Rev. Dr. S. C. Jennings, who wrote:

"I always visited Bethlehem with interest, because of the evidences of plain, sincere piety evinced by the people, and I remember seasons of communion and of visiting with Elder Potter when the Spirit of the Lord was wonderfully moving upon the minds of the people."

Among the incidents of the work of grace at that time are such as the following:

A near neighbor of Mr. Potter was a man addicted to profanity of speech, to open violation of the Lord's day. He was also engaged in selling intoxicating liquors without a license. His house was a den of iniquity. It was understood that a mock Lord's Supper was celebrated there on the Sabbath. Mr. Potter remonstrated with him, and threatened, if this continued, to have him brought before the court. The man promised that as soon as his present stock was exhausted he would give up the traffic. And he kept his word. Soon after he began to attend church. One day, while Mr. Potter was at work in the field, whom should he

see approaching him but this man! He had come to converse with him about the interests of his soul! Said he: "Mr. Potter, you don't know how bad a man I have been. I have been profane, and a drunkard and a Sabbath-breaker. Can there be mercy for a sinner like me?"

Ah, we who know that man so well can see his eye sparkle and fill with a tear as he answers, "'The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin.'"

From that time the man came frequently to Mr. Potter's house, and sometimes accompanied by his wife, to converse upon the subject of religion. Mr. Potter would read to them from the Bible, and explain to them the way of salvation, and pray with them. They both became truly pious, and united with the church, and they and their five children were baptized. Great was the influence of this man's change in the community. One of his neighbors was a very ungodly man, and he was deeply annoyed at the change in his friend. It troubled his conscience as in passing the house he could hear the voice of his friend praying in his family. And the blessed Spirit had been at work in *his* family. His wife and daughter attended Sabbath-school and church, and became hopefully pious. They were both received by the session into the church. The husband and father, having heard of it, was very angry; he laid all the blame upon Mr. Potter. He threatened that if his wife and

daughter went forward to the Lord's table, he would drag them from it. And the only time he was known to go to church was on the communion-day, when he went with the avowed purpose of carrying his threat into execution. The wife and daughter did not dare go to the Lord's table. He soon left the neighborhood, saying that he could not stand so much praying around him.

A man having been accidentally killed by the stroke of a windlass on a dredge-boat on the Ohio River opposite the place where Mr. Potter lived, inquiry was made for a minister to attend the funeral. The captain was informed that there was no minister in the neighborhood, but that there was a good man who would conduct the services. Mr. Potter was sent for. The next day was the Sabbath, and, seeing a number of these men at church, Mr. Potter told them that he would come down in the evening and hold a service on the boat. Accordingly, the evening found the men assembled in a keel-boat and Mr. Potter reading to them a sermon on the text, "Therefore, be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh." The Holy Spirit was evidently present in his convincing power, and a number of the men came to him to converse with him about their souls. The captain afterward wrote to him that his labors resulted in the conversion of several of those hardened river-men.

A youth, a relative of Mr. Potter, visited him.

He conversed closely with him of his guilt and the danger of losing his soul. That youth soon wrote to Mr. P., saying, "I am in much trouble about my salvation; write me and tell me how I can be saved." The letter was answered, and by the blessing of God on the truth written him the youth became a Christian. By Mr. Potter's advice he studied for the ministry, and has for many years been a successful minister of the gospel.

An educated young man, yet unconverted, was about to study law, when Mr. Potter met him and talked to him of his soul's salvation. The young man did not relish the subject, yet he talked to him again. The young man became somewhat interested, and wrote to Mr. Potter. His letter was answered. The truth was blessed, and the young man became eminently pious, studied theology and went as a missionary to India.

A family, nine in number, moved into the neighborhood. They were neglecters of religion, of the Sabbath and of the house of God. They were very poor. Mr. Potter visited them, learned their condition, secured employment for them, invited them to church, and with the aid of Mrs. Potter furnished them with clothing fit to appear in the public assembly. They began at once to attend church, and the children entered the Sabbath-school. Before long the parents showed signs of personal concern for their souls. Mr. Potter constantly visited and prayed with them, and at length

they were received into communion with the church, and their seven children were baptized. The man became an active, praying Christian, and he with his wife adorned the doctrine of God our Saviour for many a year. Their children also in due time, most of them, recognized the vows taken for them at baptism, and were admitted to the full privileges of church-membership. One of them is a substantial and useful ruling elder in the United Presbyterian Church, and tells this story of his family history.

After the organization of the church in 1832 the need of a church edifice pressed hard upon the people. Accordingly, measures were taken to secure the prize. As usual, the heaviest portion of the task fell upon Mr. Potter. One proposition after another coming to naught, he prepared a subscription-paper, headed it himself with a subscription of fifty dollars, went first through the neighborhood and secured all he could, and then went abroad among his friends in other places and secured additional pledges. Mr. Conner gave thirty dollars, and also the land occupied by the church and burying-ground.

At length the frame of the church was ready to go up, and now a serious question arose. In those days no temperance societies existed. Few men were to be found who did not make larger or smaller use of intoxicating drink as a beverage, and a house-raising without whisky was a proceed-

ing without precedent in that region. The raising of the frame of a new house was an occasion of wide-extended interest.

It furnished an excuse for a holiday, and the assembling of so many who in those times did not often meet opened a way for renewal of friendships, the distribution of the accumulated gossip of many a neighborhood, and the discussion of the political and other questions of the day. But not the least among the attractions was the liberal supply of whisky which formed an essential concomitant of such house-raising. When, however, the question was put to Mr. Potter as to the number of gallons of whisky he would have provided, his answer was, "Not a gill"—"But you cannot have a house-raising without whisky."—"By the grace of God we'll try." The day came, and the people with it from near and far. The erection of a church was something some of them had never seen. The day was beautiful and bright. The church frame went up without whisky, and the poople were as sober at night as they had been in the morning, and a great deal happier than if the erection had been accompanied with drunkenness and drunken brawls. And it illustrates the influence of one man and of one bold stand for the right that this church-raising was the beginning of a new era in that community.

They were able to go so far as to enclose the building and plaster it. But for years the pews

consisted of boards resting on blocks of wood, and the work-bench formed the pulpit. But the Spirit of the King of heaven was as frequently and as cordially present in that rough tabernacle as in the costliest minster with its mosaic ceiling, stained-glass windows, thundering organ and dim religious light.

On one occasion the Rev. Dr. Riddle, pastor of the Third Church at Pittsburg, preached for them by the appointment of presbytery, and held a communion-service. Seeing their poverty and the sore need of pulpit and pews, he bore word of these things to the people of his church, who at once raised the money needed to fit up the church with pews. The ladies of the congregation also went to work and raised money to put up the pulpit.

Still, they had no pastor. But they were by no means destitute of watchful supervision. Once every month the faithful session of the little church met from house to house in the homes of the elders, and spent a whole evening in talking over the interests of the church and praying together for its prosperity. As the time for the sacrament of the Lord's Supper drew near, the session, under the lead of Mr. Potter, took measures to realize the greatest possible amount of good from the occasion. Weeks before the day came the announcement would be made and the expectations of the people awakened. The administration of the sacrament became at once the subject

of many prayers. Worldly affairs would be so adjusted that nothing should interfere with the attendance upon the ordinance.

Jesus was born in a stable, and before the building of the church at Bethlehem the session sometimes met in Mr. Potter's barn, and there, amidst the lowing of oxen, applicants for the communion were examined and received into the church, and John Potter poured as fervent prayers to God in that barn as perhaps were ever offered in the ear of a listening God. It was the house of God, for the Lord was there.

The Friday before communion-day was observed as a day of fasting and prayer. On Saturday the congregation met for worship; the communion Sabbath was a great day in their Israel. The people assembled early to attend the communicants' prayer-meeting. Many people from the neighboring congregations would be present at the services. The house was crowded. After sermon came a recess of thirty minutes, during which time the table was spread before the pulpit. On the reassembling of the congregation a hymn would be given out, during the singing of which members would leave the pews and sit down at the tables. The separation of families often produced a profoundly solemn impression, it intimated so touchingly a future and final separation at the judgment-seat of Christ! When those seated at the table had partaken of the elements they would withdraw, and another

company take their places. To each company a few earnest words were spoken.

On Monday morning the congregation again assembled, and often the meeting was intensely solemn, and as they reluctantly parted they felt that they had been to the house of God and to the gate of heaven.

At the various communions during the time that Mr. Potter was virtually pastor of the church one hundred and ninety-four persons were received into the communion of the church.

In 1844 the Rev. Samuel Hair was installed pastor over the Bethlehem church, which now had one hundred and fifty members on its communion-roll, and Mr. Potter's services were no longer so much needed in that field. But his love for souls, his unquenchable zeal and his marvelous skill in dealing with men had made him widely known, and he was earnestly solicited to enter the service of the American Tract Society as a colporteur. This proposition required no little careful and prayerful consideration. He was the head of a family consisting of a wife and five sons; it was a serious question whether duty called him to leave them and spend his time in traveling up and down the land. But as he thought and prayed the light began to break. He saw that his sons were nearing an age when they could support themselves; his wife, equally devoted to the great work with himself, was a woman of good business capacity;

and at length the conviction became strong that he ought to leave his home and enter this wide and promising field of labor. His commission came, and he began his work in his own neighborhood, visiting families, talking with them, praying with them, selling or giving religious books and tracts.

For eleven years he continued in this work, seeing the seed he scattered spring up in many a field. His custom was to visit every family within his reach. Not unfrequently he was warned against venturing into a given house because of the exceeding wickedness of the people and the certainty that only insult and abuse awaited him. But those were the very houses to which he was sure to go, and almost never did he fail of gaining an entrance and a hearing. If the parents scowled he would take from his pack some bright-covered books for children, and, offering one to a little girl and another to a little boy, he would win the little ones, and through them the mother, and sometimes through them the whole infidel family.

At one time, as he was going from house to house in company with an elder of the church within the bounds of which he was laboring, they approached the dwelling of a coarse, notorious infidel physician. The elder advised the omission of this man's abode, but this was not Mr. Potter's way; he insisted on entering and meeting the enemy face to face. The elder, however, walked on, not caring to encounter the vulgar blasphemy of the infidel

doctor. Mr. Potter entered and inquired for the head of the house, but to his regret the doctor was not at home, but his family were there. They treated him courteously; he talked with them and prayed with them, and gave them tracts, and went on his way with the pleasant consciousness that he had done his duty, and with the faith to believe that his work would not be in vain.

The following extract from a letter of one then high in office under the national government, and a well-known ruling elder in our Church, tells another story of the zeal and Christian fidelity of this model Christian worker. In his rounds as a colporteur he fell in with the young man mentioned here.

"My Dear Friend:

"My son has just shown me your truly Christian letter to him. I am truly thankful to you for the deep interest you have shown in his spiritual welfare. He is not yet, I fear, converted to God, but I feel encouraged to hope that a work of grace has been commenced in him which will issue in his being finally planted on the Rock of Ages. By the blessing of God, from what you said to him he felt deeply, even agonizingly, a sense of his lost condition. He wrote me soon after your interview with him, and from the tenor of his letter it was apparent that his conviction was pungent, and, I doubt not, the work of God's Spirit."

Both the father and the son were well known to the writer, and the son not only became a member of the Church, but a minister of the gospel and a missionary among the heathen.

As opportunity offered he would give notice of a prayer-meeting, at which he would expound a portion of the word of God as seen in the light of his own mind and experience, and impress it with copious illustration drawn from his wide observation, and urge the gospel offer home upon sinners with all the earnestness of a dying man speaking to dying men. His addresses to Sabbath-schools were numerous and full of unction. Time and again has he found himself in the midst of a congregation during a period of religious coldness and decline, and, going from house to house with his books and tracts and prayers, exhortations and tears, he has seen the people roused to a new life, and many are the instances in which a precious revival of religion has followed.

One Sabbath he entered the house of God, and the minister, seeing him, came down from the pulpit and said, "Mr. Potter, you are familiar with revivals of religion; come into the pulpit and occupy the time of this service in telling what you have seen of the reviving grace of God." He complied with the request; and we can see him with tears in his eyes and his whole frame shaking with emotion as he tells his stirring tale. The result was an awakening in that church which

brought more than one hundred souls to the communion-table; and it is on record, by one who closely watched his career, that in a surprising number of instances revivals of religion followed his labors as colporteur within the bounds of congregations.

After about eleven years' service as a colporteur of the American Tract Society, he accepted the office of collecting agent for the same society. But such was his love for souls and for his Redeemer that he still acted the missionary in all his rounds among the people. Being a Presbyterian and a ruling elder, and thus imbued with the spirit of order and law, he was very careful, when he entered a district to collect money for the Tract Society, first to visit the pastor of the church within whose bounds he wished to labor, and secure his consent. If agreeable to the pastor, he would address the people in the church, lay open his method of working, tell the story of some precious revival, and then the following week go from house to house, talking and praying with the people, and gathering whatever they chose to give him for his cause.

We believe that it is the conviction of the officers of the American Tract Society that a servant more devoted, more faithful, more successful, was never in its employ. Indeed, one long connected with that society writes with earnest emphasis his full persuasion that even Harlan Page was, to say the

least, in no degree the superior of Mr. Potter in faith, in zeal, in prayerfulness or in success in winning souls to Christ.

The Rev. S. T. Wells, now of California, who was well acquainted with Mr. Potter and his work, writes suggestively: "When a young man, a farmer, working a rough, rugged hill-farm, can take a neighborhood as rough as that and make it into a garden of the Lord, and rear a family of boys to be all of them successful ministers of the gospel, how rapidly the world might be brought to Christ were those professing godliness to become truly pious, earnest workers for their Lord, fully devoted to his service!"

In the year 1870 a letter came to the writer from Mr. Potter, saying that he was now too old for the rough work of traveling over the Western hills, and asking about work as a city missionary. One Sabbath morning I stated this to the congregation, dwelling upon the need of such work in the city, and upon the admirable qualifications of Mr. Potter for the work. At the close of the service that princely man, Herman J. Lombaert, came to me and said, "I will support that man." I wrote to Mr. Potter. He came, and for a long time Mr. Lombaert paid his salary out of his own purse. When he was taken from us other gentlemen of the church took the burden upon them, and for eight years he went up and down in this city as a colporteur of the Presbyterian Board of Publi-

cation and as the missionary of the West Spruce Street Presbyterian Church.

When now we see a man going to and fro through the world for years in succession in the ardent pursuit of one object, in tireless effort for the spiritual good of his fellow-men, we naturally ask after the moving force which produces all this activity. Whence comes it? How is it perpetuated? How is it replenished?

Well, as charity begins at home, so the piety that is genuine, endurable and always well replenished begins and is nourished and exercised in the seclusion of home. The family is the unit in the Church of Christ. It is the most ancient of institutions among men. Before Church or State existed the family existed. It is the nursery of the Church and the nursery of piety; and as the head of a household Mr. Potter was a model man. Many a time, when out with his boys in the woods or fields, he would say, "Come, let us go to God in prayer;" and there, under the bending sky, by the side of a log, they would kneel together in prayer; and those sons say that there is many a spot on that old farm hallowed in their memories "down to earth's profound and up to heaven."

The fire on the altar of family devotion was never suffered to go down. His children cannot remember a single instance in which family prayer was omitted. If he was about to set out on a journey, and the whistle of the train was already

ringing in the air, still he went on with the chapter and the prayer. If he missed the train, he would not miss the opportunity to pray once more in his household circle.

To his closet duty he was as faithful as he was to his religious duty in the family. In his earlier family life his house was too small for the seclusion he desired for his secret devotions, and he was wont to go to the barn and there pour out his heart in prayer. Among the earliest recollections of his children are the sounds of their father's voice resounding through the old barn as he pleaded with God for a blessing on them and on the Church of God; and this not only in "leafy June," but in the time when frost sparkled in the air and snow lay deep upon the ground. And such was the force of his example that his eldest son when at the age of six or seven used also to go to the barn to say his prayers; and many a time the father was seen helping the boy over the snow and ice that lay between the house and the barn, that the child might put up his prayers to God in the place where his father prayed. "As the twig is bent the tree is inclined;" and to this day that twig, now a tree of fifty summers, is inclined in the same holy direction.

His faith in prayer was like that of the apostle Paul. Every enterprise of his life was entered upon with fervent prayer. It was his custom to send up prayer to God for people he met in the

street, and what manna was to the hungry Israelite the word of God was to him. He could say with all his heart, "Thy words were found, and I did eat them, and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart."

His faith in a minute, all-directing Providence was like that of Abraham.

A minister invited him to assist him in the week of prayer. He first took counsel, as he says, of God, and went. The station, however, was six miles from the church. He did not know the way, but he writes: "A kind Providence sent a sleigh with two horses and a young man to drive them, who took me where I wanted to go."

His son John was very ill of consumption. There was no hope of his recovery, and the father was very anxious to be at home when his child should be taken away. But an urgent call came for his presence elsewhere. What should he do? He was greatly at a loss to know the will of God. He said to his dying son, "If you wish me to stay, I will stay;" his son said, "Father I think you ought to go." He went, but he went putting up an agonizing prayer that he might be allowed to return before his child died. He did return, and afterward he wrote, "How good is God to me! I came home on Friday, and found John much weaker, but still enjoying that same heavenly calm. On Sabbath morning, after the sun had risen in its brightness, he asked to be raised up on the bedside.

I asked him if the Saviour was still with him. With a sweet smile he nodded assent. He had prayed to be taken home on the sacred Sabbath, and his prayer was answered. I thank God for granting my request to be present at John's death and to have him die in my arms. Glory to God!" And he adds: "I think God is blessing John's sickness and death to a great many. We had a very large prayer-meeting at our house on Sabbath evening, while John's body lay in the front room, and there is to be another prayer-meeting this evening."

The tone of his piety appears in a clear light in the following lines to his oldest son and daughter-in-law: "If I know my own heart, I do desire to be a holy man of God and be instrumental in leading sinners to Jesus. I entreat you both to pray earnestly for me every day that God would make me very useful. Dear children, keep near sweet, precious Jesus. Keep up an hourly correspondence with that dear heavenly Friend. How glorious will it be when we get home to see Jesus as he is! How much happiness it will give us to gaze on sweet Jesus! and how much more lovely will we be, for we shall then be like Jesus!"

In the same letter he writes: "Dear ——, do you not remember the season of prayer we enjoyed at the haystack? I think you will unite with me in thanking God for his great goodness in answering our broken prayers. I think the Lord has been with me in my work. I made a speech last

Sabbath in the Baptist church. The Lord helped me. Much interest was manifested. I visited their families during the week, and at their request held three prayer-meetings. There seemed to be a waking up among them."

Mr. Potter was burdened with an almost overwhelming sense of the value of the soul and of its danger while out of Christ. The pressure of this burden was seen in his conversation, and in his prayers, and in his exhortations, and in his tireless labors. Even at social gatherings this topic could not be omitted, and in most cases he would see to it that a social meeting was closed with prayer.

Blessed are the peacemakers; and Mr. Potter received the title of peacemaker in his neighborhood. As soon as he learned of any serious misunderstanding among the neighbors which threatened a suit at law, he would seek out the parties, secure a calm statement of the facts, kneel with them in prayer, and in many an instance the difficulty was adjusted and no little heartburning avoided.

In his intercourse with the men of the world he was uniformly kind and affable, but such were his known sentiments and such his Christian bearing that very rarely did any man venture an oath or an unseemly word in his presence; and when such an occurrence took place it met with a rebuke such as pious, honest indignation compelled.

A full day's work was never enough to satisfy his zeal if in the evening he could find anything

more to do. To his son he writes: "Last Monday night we had a large cottage prayer-meeting. A dear good brother who assists me made a very good address on the work of the Holy Spirit. I enjoyed it very much, and the people did also. The time to close the meeting being at hand, I said that we would have one more prayer and God's children present would unite in that prayer, and that any present who wished to be remembered in that prayer might hold up the hand. Quite a number of hands went up. Then we had a very solemn prayer. Sowing good seed is not enough. It must have the rain of the Holy Ghost."

No trait of Mr. Potter's spiritual life was more prominent than his dependence upon the power of the Holy Spirit. Every holy stir within him, every sign of spiritual life among the people, every tear of contrition on a sinner's cheek, every special exhibition of spiritual warmth in a prayer-meeting, he ascribed heartily and wholly to the blessed Holy Ghost.

His bearing in his work was that of a prophet of God. There was a kind of authority in his tone and manner which not many could resist. Entering a house one morning, he found the woman at the washtub. After a word of salutation and kindly inquiry if all was well in her home, he proposed prayer. She answered that she had her work to do, and had no time then for prayer. "Not time to pray?" said he, in his solemn, earnest tone;

"why, it is God who gives you the health and strength you have to do the work of your household." It was but a moment before she dropped the clothes and was on her knees, while he poured out for her soul and her family one of those fervent petitions with which we are so familiar.

His *perseverance* was indomitable. Calling at a certain house, he was roughly told that his presence was not desired. He went away, and when he reached home he made the family in that house the subject of special prayer. A few days after, being in the neighborhood, he called again, only to meet with a similar rebuff. Again he took the case to God in prayer. A third time he called, and a fourth time, with like result, but following each visit with renewed supplication. The fifth time the door was thrown wide open to receive him, for God had preceded him with a trying providence. A little child lay dead, and Sorrow cried for Christian consolation.

Knocking at the door of a house, a woman answered the call, and seeing the missionary she said in a severe tone, "I know all about you, and I want nothing to do with you."

"Madam," said the missionary, "your house is your own, but I shall have to say at the great day of account that I called at your door to tell you about the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shut the door against me; and inasmuch as you do it unto me, you do it unto him."

"Come in," said the woman. After a little she asked him to pray with her, and when he left she asked him to call again.

Mr. Potter was a man of *one idea*, and that idea was the glory of Christ in the salvation of souls. One Christmas morning a man of intemperate habits called on him to make him a Christmas present. Mr. Potter had visited the man's mother during her illness, and had been the means of no little comfort to her soul, and the son felt it to be the least that he could do to make this slight acknowledgment of the service. When word came to Mr. Potter in his room that this man was there on this errand, he said earnestly, "Keep him till I come down; don't let him go." His one thought was, not the present, but the soul of the man who brought it. He soon made his appearance, and after thanking the man for the gift, entered at once upon an earnest exhortation to reform and to prepare to follow his sainted mother to the skies.

And withal he was a man of *large and generous liberality*. People who saw him in his plain attire going up and down our narrow streets might suppose that he was dependent for a livelihood upon what he received as city missionary. This was not the case. He was very far from being a rich man, but he had means enough, had he so pleased, to spend his advancing years at his ease in a quiet, comfortable home. But to him, with perishing sinners within reach of his voice, this was impossi-

ble. Work he must; and he was constantly drawing upon his own means to enable him to live and to give, as he was constantly doing, to relieve the wants of the poor and needy with whom he was coming continually into contact.

In the list of subscriptions for the erection of the Bethlehem church his stood at the head, and was the largest, and in Philadelphia many a poor family was saved from ejection upon the sidewalk for lack of ability to pay the rent-bill by his own benefactions, increased with what he solicited from others.

It is of course impossible to put the results of such a life into sentences. They defy statistics. Who can tell the amount of health-giving vitality that yonder tree in the landscape has imparted to the atmosphere during the century of its growth? Who can tell the amount of vapor that yonder sparkling lake has contributed during the period of its sojourn in the basin where God placed it to moisten the air and form those clouds white enough to be the chariots of angels, or in the sunset sky gorgeous enough to be the mantle of God? Could we gather the families among whom he has been going as steadily as the sun rolls for these eight years; the poor that he has relieved with his benefactions; the widows whose rent he has paid; the women and children for whom he has secured raiment that they might go to the house of God; the sick that he has visited; the dying and bereaved that he has comforted; the men he has

been the means of reforming, and all the others he has blessed,—we should hear a chorus of benediction worth more than all the hoarse huzzas that ever rent the air from the lips of men shouting the fame won on the field of battle. The very children sing his praise. "Ah," said a mother to me, "just as soon as the children saw him they would run to meet him and take him by the hand and lead him into the house."

He asked me once to go and see a boy of some ten years of age who was dying of consumption. The mother said to me, "He thinks the world of Mr. Potter. The other day he was out of his head, and when my back was turned he got out of bed, and when I looked again he was gone. I went after him, and I found him halfway down the stairs; and when I asked him where he was going he said, 'For Mr. Potter.'" And the woman continued: "Mr. Potter was here one evening before we had lighted the gas. He talked and prayed with the boy, and then I called his attention and pointed with my thumb over my shoulder, and he looked and then saw my husband, who was there intoxicated. He went to him; he talked and prayed with him; he made him promise to go with him that night to the temperance meeting. He never let him alone till he had got him to sign the pledge. And now, for a long time, every Saturday night he has come straight home and given me his wages."

Another woman, mother of a family of six chil-

dren, said to me, "We don't get half so much money these hard times as we used to, but we are twice as happy. For then my husband drank; and when the head of the family drinks, no matter how much money you have, everything goes wrong. But Mr. Potter came and got my husband to sign the pledge and to go to church, and now he is an entirely changed man. He never drinks anything. He is a member of church. He prays in his family morning and evening." Here is a whole family reconstructed, as it were, through the labors of this man. The abundance of his labors is indicated in the following statement:

For eight years in succession he visited, on an average, three thousand two hundred and forty families a year, making an aggregate of twenty-five thousand nine hundred and twenty families. In these families the truth was urged home upon saint and sinner, and during the eight years more than *twenty-four thousand* prayers were offered in the families he visited. A good tract was left at each visit, and occasionally a volume of religious thought. A Bible or Testament was given to those who had none. One largely interested in evangelistic work writes me: "Brother Potter attended our mission-service every Sabbath afternoon. He held a prayer-meeting every Monday evening. He visited our Tuesday evening prayer-meeting, conducted by the laborers at the mission. During the summer months, while our Friday evening meeting

was suspended, he conducted a prayer-meeting in Burton street, and this prayer-meeting is still continued."

In his rounds from house to house during the eight years of his life in Philadelphia he gave away nearly five thousand volumes of the works published by the Board of Publication, and more than half a million of religious tracts. And knowing as we do what a single volume may do or a single tract, by the blessing of God upon it, and especially when the volume is accompanied by faithful, tearful exhortation and prayer, we may safely assume that this devoted worker for Christ thus sowed seeds that will yield a large and rich harvest for heavenly garners.

As the result in part of these manifold labors, a considerable number of family altars have been erected, some two hundred and fifty pupils gathered into Sabbath-schools, and a number of persons reclaimed from habits of intemperance. The meetings held by Messrs. Moody and Sankey, Mr. Potter attended day and night for nine weeks, during which time he conversed with at least one hundred and twenty anxious inquirers. Many of these he followed to their homes, to converse and pray with them till they were hopefully converted to God. After these meetings were closed the gas-men at Twenty-third and Market streets invited him to lecture to them. These men, he said, proved the most attentive listeners he ever addressed. Every

other day for ten weeks, at the hour of noon, he visited and addressed them.

There is good reason for believing that during the eight years he labored in Philadelphia he was the means of leading at least *four hundred souls* to the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world, and in all probability the number saved through his instrumentality during his life considerably exceeded *eight hundred souls*. At least twenty young men through his instrumentality found their way into the gospel ministry. One young man in a Western town was so impressed with what he saw of Mr. Potter's course of life that he was led to the Saviour; then he became a colporteur, then a minister, then a missionary to India; and then, his health failing there, he returned to his own country, and he is now a faithful and successful preacher of the gospel.

But the longest lives must come to an end. Early in July, 1878, Mr. Potter called upon one of our families in Helmuth street, and scarcely had he taken his seat when he fell forward on his face, and for a few moments remained in a state of insensibility. When he came partially to himself he placed his hand on his left side, as if it were the seat of acute distress. He soon recovered, and, after resting a while, went on his way, declining the proffered company of a companion to see him safely to his home. This attack was the beginning of the end.

Soon after he left Philadelphia for the home of his son, the Rev. Gilbert M. Potter, at Sharpsburg, Pa., who, suffering from ill-health, went to Clifton Springs, leaving his father in charge of his two congregations. For a month he lectured every Sabbath in both congregations and assisted in the Sabbath-school. On the return of the absent son, Mr. Potter went to spend a season with another son at Darlington, Beaver county, Pa. At times he complained of a pain in the region of the heart. On Sabbath, August 25th, he went to church and heard his son preach on the life and death of Stephen, at the close of which he offered one of his fervent, impassioned prayers. On his return he was heard to exclaim, "Oh, what a glorious death was that of Stephen!" Tears came into his eyes as he spoke of Jesus standing to welcome the beloved martyr into heaven. A few days before his death, at family worship, he selected the 465th hymn in the Hymnal, beginning—

"Father of eternal grace,
Glorify thyself in me."

Tuesday, August 27th, he seemed better—rode out several miles with his son, and greatly enjoyed the drive. He talked freely of the exceeding goodness of God; of events that had occurred many years ago; of his satisfaction at seeing his sons settled in congregations where their labors were appreciated by the people and blessed of God. That

day he read the Epistle of James and a part of one of the Epistles of Peter, also an historical sermon, and studied the Sabbath-school lesson for the following Sabbath. The evening was spent in cheerful conversation with the family, heaven being largely the burden of thought. He conducted family worship, reading the fourth chapter of 2 Corinthians, and led in a fervent prayer. At ten o'clock he went to his room, and was soon seized with pain and shortness of breath, and for three hours suffered acute distress. About three o'clock he fell asleep, waking again in half an hour very sick. Again he slept, and about half-after four in the morning his son noticed a spasmodic movement in his frame, and the silver cord was loosed and the golden bowl was broken; the pitcher was broken at the fountain and the wheel broken at the cistern, and the spirit returned to the God who gave it.

This was on Wednesday morning, August 28th. On the Friday morning following funeral services were conducted at the house of his son, in Darlington, by the Rev. D. H. Laverty, assisted by the Rev. R. S. Morton, the Rev. J. W. Johnston, the Rev. Samuel Patterson and the Rev. Hugh Sturgeon, the last two being ministers in the United Presbyterian Church. The remains were then removed to the Pine Creek church, seven miles from Pittsburg, where his wife had been buried nine years before. Services were here conducted by the Rev. Thomas Lawrence of Sharpsburg, the Rev.

Dr. A. Williams, the Rev. Dr. E. E. Swift, the Rev. G. M. Hair, the Rev. Jonathan Wilson, missionary from Siam, and the Rev. M. A. Parkinson; the last two had been members of Mr. Potter's Bible-class at Bethlehem. Just as the sun was going down the body was lowered into the grave, to rest till the resurrection.

The following kindly testimonials are well worth preserving:

The Rev. William M. Paxton, D. D., wrote years ago: "Mr. John Potter is an elder in one of our Presbyterian churches. I have known him for a long time, both in his public and private character, and take great pleasure in commending him to the confidence and Christian regard of my brethren in the ministry. He has labored with great acceptance in the city of Pittsburg, and has won for himself the entire confidence and warm affection of all our Christian people. As an expression of my grateful sense of the good which he has accomplished here I volunteer this testimonial to his worth."

The following is from the Rev. W. S. Plumer, D. D.:

Theological Seminary, Columbia, S. C., Oct. 5, 1878.

"For nearly a quarter of a century I have known and loved Mr. John Potter. In all that time I do not think I have ever known him to manifest an unchristian temper about anything. He seemed

never to forget the worth of souls, the shortness of time or the value of opportunity for doing good to men. His judgment was sound and clear, unaffected by passion or prejudice. His manners were easy and inoffensive. He easily introduced the subject of religion whenever he chose. He had great courage in pleading Christ's cause. His addresses in public meetings were models of simplicity, good sense and piety. He was a very humble man; I suppose no man ever regarded him as proud or vain. He well understood the apostle when he said, 'Condescend to men of low estate.' I never had a truer friend; I hope to spend my eternity with him."

To give insight into Mr. Potter's methods of Christian work, we add one of his monthly reports in his own simple, earnest style:

"Visiting a family, the lady said she was not a Christian; she desired to be, but she felt something holding her back. I told her the flesh lusteth against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh. There is a warfare, but if she would earnestly pray for God's holy Spirit to work in her to will and to do of his own good pleasure, he would certainly give her the victory. The great point was for her to confess and forsake all her sins, and to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and she would be saved. She said she had been to the mourners' bench, and the Methodist minister had tried to make her be-

lieve that she was converted, but she was sure she was not; now she was anxious to be a true Christian. I told her the parable of the Prodigal Son and other passages of God's word to make the plan of salvation as plain as I could, urging her to press into the kingdom without delay, telling her I would now pray for her, and desired her in the time of prayer to dedicate herself entirely to God's service. After prayer I gave her a 'Come to Jesus,' urging her to adopt the sentiment of the hymn 'Just as I Am.'—In another family the lady told me they were not church-members, and did not attend church. I told her what God said of the danger of the sinner. She evidently felt the power of the truth—shed tears. I told her of the love of God in the provisions of the gospel, and salvation was offered to her as free as God's air she breathed, and now, if she would accept of it and believe on the Lord Jesus with her whole heart, God's word for it she would be saved. I prayed with her. I hope the Lord has converted her.—Visiting a family in a court, found two daughters sick with consumption. They have no pastor. I took pains to show them the danger of the impenitent sinner, and then the willingness and ability of Jesus to save them; then prayed with them. The parents are church-members; they were very thankful.—Calling at a door, the lady refused to let me in. I went on and visited other families; that same woman came after me and invited me to come back and visit them. I

did so; had a very interesting visit. She is not a church-member, but promised to attend church. She had recently lost her husband.—Visiting a family, none of them church-members, I showed them the danger of neglecting this great salvation, and the importance of at once believing on the Lord Jesus Christ with the whole heart. I prayed with them.—From some cause fewer families refuse to let me into their houses than formerly.

"I think I feel more of God's sensible presence with me. Frequently I am urged to visit families again. Visited a family; some of them had been members of the Church, but had backslidden. I showed them the fearful consequences of such a course; told them what God said of apostates; I prayed with and for them. The lady told me of a sick woman up stairs; I found her sick with consumption. I presented truth to her as appropriately as I could, and prayed with her. She was very thankful—urged me to visit her frequently, as she had no pastor.—Visiting in a court, found a young man who had been badly beaten in a fight, and was in bed. Three of his wicked companions were present. I gave them all a plain, kind talk about their guilt, and the result of spending their youth in breaking God's commands—urged them with all kindness and solemnity to remember their Creator now in the days of their youth.—Visiting another family, the lady said they had not been attending church, for her husband had been engaged in a gas-

factory, and he had to work on the Sabbath, and she did not go to church because he did not go. I showed her how wicked it was for them to neglect the means God had ordained for their salvation. She promised me they would attend church here.—Visited a good old man in a third story. He had fallen down stairs and got badly hurt—was there alone day and night. I comforted him with the consolations of the gospel, and prayed with him. He was very thankful—said I had greatly benefited him.—Visited an interesting family of six children and the parents, the mother a church-member. I talked kindly to the children; have the promise of three of them to attend our Sabbath-school. The mother has her church connection in the country. I advised that she get her certificate and hand it in here, which she promised to do soon. I talked plainly to the father of his exposure to the wrath of God, and showed the plan of salvation and prayed with them. Promised to visit them in time to come."

Among the lessons that speak to us from such a record is *the immeasurable service possible to a soul fully imbued with the spirit of Him who went about doing good.* Here is a plain man, of little pretension to high education or large culture, for many years toiling hard, day by day, on a farm, and yet from the time of his first communion, at the age of seventeen, working with untiring diligence and marked success in winning souls to Christ. The secret of this man's power and success was not ex-

traordinary intellect, though he was by no means an intellectual weakling: it was not specially favorable opportunities: it was a deep-toned piety; it was love for souls; it was a vivid realization of the truth of God's word and of the power of prayer. The God of the Bible, all holy, all just and all love, was to him a being as real as his own self. What less than this should be said of any Christian? And if the seven millions of communicants in evangelical churches in our country were like him, the light of the sure-coming millennial morning would soon be seen streaming over the eastern hills.

A second lesson is the *immeasurable importance of the colporteur agency.* It is not too much to say that without an agency involving the fundamental principles of the colporteur system the gospel will never be preached to *every creature.* The pastors can no more overtake this work than they can each be in four places at the same time. Of the forty-five millions of people in our country, at least *one-fourth* never enter a house of worship. In the city of New York there are church accommodations in evangelical churches for not over one-third of the people; the same is true of Philadelphia; and unless an agency be employed to go from door to door and carry the gospel into the homes of the people, the people will perish! And all through our land, especially in the more thinly-settled portions of the West, tens of thousands of families are never reached except as they are reached by this

agency. It combines three powerful elements of success—the living book, the living voice and direct personal contact and appeal.

*The Living Book.*—Calling once at the house of an attendant upon our church, I met the lady at the door. She returned, and after a few words I left her a copy of James's *Anxious Inquirer*, with the request that she would read it. Not long after she sent for me, and I found her in an anguish of mind over her sins and guilt in the sight of an all-holy God. One who is now in the pulpit told me that when he was a sailor he went one day to his chest, and under some clothing he found a tract that some one, mother or sister, had slipped in there. It was entitled *The Swearer's Prayer*. He read it and re-read it, and his blood chilled while he read. He went to a group of his fellow-sailors and said, "Shipmates, if what I read here is true, we are in a bad way." The result was his conversion, and devotion of himself to the cause of Christ in the ministry of the gospel.

*And the Living Voice in Exhortation and Prayer.*—An aged deist in the State of Georgia, who had fought for infidelity all through life till he was now eighty years old, was converted through the voice of one of his slaves whom he overheard praying for his soul.

One of these Christian workers in the employ of the American Tract Society writes: "Far in the mountains I entered a cabin without windows

or floor, and found a family of ten children, not one of whom could read, nor had they ever heard a sermon. The father was unable to read, and was dreadfully profane. The mother could read imperfectly, but was very ignorant. I had a long conversation with the old man. After he left the house the mother showed deep anxiety on the subject of religion. The husband refused to accept a Bible, saying that the old woman would spend all her time trying to read it; and she was unwilling to take it after he left lest he should find it and abuse her. However, I determined to put the Bible where she could get it, and so placed it under the steps as I left the house. The cabin was six miles from the settlement, and the old man was often away all day, so the woman had time to spell out much of the New Testament. She read to the children, three of whom were grown girls, and they became interested. At length she felt that she must pray, and, exacting a promise from the children that they would not tell the father, she commenced to pray with them.

"One evening the old man came in unexpectedly and found her reading the Bible. 'Oh, how is this? Just as I expected: that fellow that prayed here left it, did he? Well, old woman, read some for us.' She commenced, and read slowly of Christ being led out to Calvary and nailed to the cross, and the two thieves nailed one on each side of him. He stopped her, and with an oath told her to read

it again and again. At length he retired. She found the light dawning on her mind, and was able to accept of Christ as her Saviour; and in the fullness of her heart she felt that she must pray with her children and commit them to her new-found Saviour. But the old man, though quiet, was not asleep, and her prayers and rejoicings reached his heart. In the morning he went out to the woods and tried to pray, and when he returned he called his wife and said, 'Mother, gather the family: I must be a Christian;' and from that hour he commenced in the Lord's service. Returning some considerable time afterward, I timed my visit so as to reach the house when I thought the old man would be away. To my astonishment I saw him coming to meet me, and I checked my horse, for I was afraid of him. He ran out crying, 'Bless God for sending you here again!' and took me from my horse and actually carried me into the house. The man was a new man. I sent them a preacher, and the parents and nine of the children professed faith in Christ."

This, no doubt, is an exceptional instance, but it indicates the kind of service that is absolutely essential to the carrying into effect the command of a risen Saviour: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."

Such, then, is the genuine work of the colporteur. This is the work done by the missionaries of the Board of Publication. Scores of these men are

now in the field going from house to house in a course of genuine gospel, pastoral visitation. Since the Reunion, now nine years ago, the missionaries of this Board have distributed by sale 581,829 volumes, and by gift, 461,531 volumes, a total of 1,043,360 volumes. They have also given away 35,060,843 pages of tracts, and have visited 1,027,143 families. Or let us look a little further back. Since the year 1850 they have distributed by sale 2,264,616 volumes, and by gift, 1,097,892, a total of 3,363,508 volumes. They have also given away 68,078,333 pages of tracts, and have visited 4,239,350 families. Let us remember that a book does not perish with a single reading. It lives on, and teaches the children what it taught the parents. The vast majority of those 3,363,000 volumes are yet preserved in the homes where they were left, and are yet, in hours of loneliness or of thoughtfulness, giving instruction to millions of families in the way of life eternal.

A very large proportion of their visits are the only visits of the kind the family ever receives. These visits are made to families beyond the reach of the gospel through any other instrumentality. These missionaries also establish Sabbath-schools in destitute places, which schools become the nuclei of churches where people long neglected now enjoy regular Sabbath service and all the safeguards, instructions and consolations of a regularly-preached gospel. It is only about

four years since this work was definitely added to their former duties. Since that time they have visited and aided 6718 Sabbath-schools, and have organized 363 new schools in places before entirely destitute. Through their efforts over 12,000 children, before uncared for, have begun to receive instruction in the word of God and guidance in the way of eternal life. How blessed and how important is this aspect of the Board's missionary work! Yet this, we trust, is but the beginning of far greater and more blessed efforts in this direction. Let the Church furnish the necessary means, and this Board a few years hence will report to you its thousands of new Sabbath-schools organized and its hundreds of thousands of neglected children gathered into them in every part of the land.

No one acquainted with the actual work of the Board through its missionaries will fail to recognize it as an absolutely necessary part of our Church machinery, nor fail to see that the contributor can make no better investment of the Lord's money than on the labors of the missionary work of the Board of Publication. Standing on the margin of this great field of labor, and lifting up his voice like a trumpet, is the spirit of JOHN POTTER, the Model Christian Worker, saying to one and all, "The field is white to harvest, and let every one do what his hands find to do, and with his might."

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